

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE  
TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
MEETING NOTES

Date, Time & Place:  
January 6, 2016, 5:30-7:30  
MIT building E25, Room 117, Carleton Street

Attendance

*Committee Members*

Joseph Beggan, Kelly Brown, Devin Chausse, Karen Dumaine, Charlie Fineman, Robert Fitzgerald, Jim Gascoigne, Denise Jillson, Joseph Maguire, Doug Manz, Jeremy Mendelson, Susan Pacheco, Katherine Rafferty, Simon Shapiro, Arthur Strang, Alexander Taylor

*City of Cambridge*

Tegin Bennett and Cleo Stoughton (Community Development), Adam Shulman (Traffic, Parking and Transportation), Kathy Watkins (Public Works)

*Presenters, official entities, and members of the public*

Four members of the public were present. Philip Groth and Erik Scheier (MBTA) were present.

Committee Introductions and Administrative Business

November and December 2015 notes were approved. Marcus Goodwin is moving and will no longer serve on the Committee.

Public Comment

Mike Stanley announced that TransitX is planning to compete in the USDOT Smart City Challenge, for which applications are due February 4, 2016.

Cambridge Five Year Plan for Street and Sidewalk Reconstruction

Kathy Watkins from the Department of Public Works (DPW) presented the process for developing the Five Year Plan for street and sidewalk reconstruction as well as which streets are in the plan. Please look at the DPW website for a presentation on the plan as well as an interactive construction map.

*Information and discussion:*

- The Five Year Plan has focused recently on Complete Streets, accessibility, bicycle facilities, and street trees. Another focus is maintaining bicycle and pedestrian access to points of interest during construction. The Plan helps the City coordinate with private utility companies.
- The Five Year Plan is updated every year between January and May, aligned with the City's budgeting process.
- Streets and sidewalks in need of reconstruction are prioritized and placed into the Five Year Plan based on available information and input from various sources, including:
  - High priority areas: areas within a 150' buffer of parks, major squares, libraries, schools, youth centers, elderly housing, and senior centers. Approximately 50% of Cambridge streets are within a high priority area.
  - 40' buffer around bus routes
  - Major thoroughfares
  - Commission for Persons with Disabilities priorities
  - Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee priorities
  - Sidewalk condition survey
  - Pavement management system
  - Missing curb ramps
- DPW has met with other committees (e.g., the Bicycle and Pedestrian Committees) in the past, and would like to get input from the Transit Committee as well.
- The budgets for street and sidewalk reconstruction in future years are uncertain, and the Five Year Plan is adjusted accordingly. In general, the Five Year Plan assumes roughly \$4.5 million in available funds (\$2.5 million from Chapter 90, and \$2 million from City budget). Additional funding may be available for sewer separation projects, like the work in progress in West Cambridge, and for larger projects, such as the reconstruction of an entire square (e.g., Central Square). There is additional funding for miscellaneous spot improvements.

- Watkins noted that there are many more streets and sidewalks in need of repair than can be addressed in any given year. The life cycle of a reconstructed road is about 20-30 years, with surface improvements needed during that time.
- *Transit improvements:* Watkins noted that bus routes are considered in the development of the Five Year Plan; additionally, bus routes are often along arterials, which are also prioritized in the plan. The Committee advocated for prioritizing transit improvements to an even greater degree. In addition, the City and Committee can overlay bus routes with the existing Five Year Plan to identify upcoming opportunities to build transit improvements into near-term projects.
  - *Some of the projects currently included in Five Year Plan with bus routes:* Massachusetts Avenue (south of Porter Square; FY15/16), Concord Avenue (FY16), Huron Avenue (FY16), Pearl Street (FY16/17), Green Street (FY19), and River Street (FY20)
- *Bus priority:* The Committee continues to advocate for inclusion of bus priority treatments (e.g., queue jump lanes, bus only lanes, transit signal priority), and the City continues to look for opportunities to use these treatments. There are often many competing uses of a limited amount of space. The Committee and City can work together to strategize and prioritize locations to implement bus priority improvements.
- *Street trees:* When placing trees on sidewalks, there must be a minimum 4' path around the tree. In some cases, it is possible to build a curb extension (resulting in the loss of parking) around an existing tree, or to plant a new tree on a curb extension.
- *Sidewalk materials:* Approximately 68% of sidewalks in Cambridge are concrete; 25% are brick. During reconstruction, DPW's policy is to replace the material that was there before construction. Watkins noted that brick is expensive. Additionally, there are accessibility concerns with traditional brick (e.g., unevenness, gaps between bricks). DPW now uses an asphalt base and wire cut brick, which tends to remain accessible longer.
- *Raised crossings:* Recent projects have included raised crosswalks, which reduce pooling of water near curb ramps.

### City Winter Operations

Kathy Watkins from the Department of Public Works provided an overview of how the City handles snow operations and coordination with the MBTA. For more information, visit [DPW's website](#).

#### *Information and discussion:*

- *Snow removal:* DPW does some snow removal, depending on how much snow is received in a given year. Last year, the City used many different sites for snow storage. The largest snow pile, located on MIT's campus, did not melt until the summer. Often, there were not enough resources to do more snow removal.
- *Deicing:* DPW does not use pure "regular" (NaCl) salt, which is environmentally undesirable and damages concrete, but rather a mixture, part of which is a beer byproduct.
- *Parking during snow emergencies:* Last year, approximately 1200 vehicles used off-street parking facilities during parking bans.
- *Transit and snow clearance responsibility:*
  - The MBTA clears snow at bus stops along its key bus routes (Routes 1, 66, 71, 73, and 77 in Cambridge).
  - DPW clears streets and sidewalks adjacent to public property, as well as some bus stops and curb ramps on major streets.
  - Cemusa, the private company that installs and maintains many bus shelters in Cambridge, also clears shelters.
- *Enforcement:* City has increased ticketing for unshoveled or icy sidewalks, and uses door hangers to communicate with renters.
- *Reporting problems:* Unshoveled or icy sidewalks and insufficiently cleared bus stops can be reported through any of these channels:
  - City of Cambridge - [Report an Unshoveled or Icy Sidewalk](#)
  - City of Cambridge - [SeeClickFix](#) – the City is in the process of moving from iReport to Commonwealth Connect/SeeClickFix
  - Contact the MBTA at 617.222.3200 or [snowandice@mbta.com](mailto:snowandice@mbta.com)

## Development Projects

Cambridge staff described the process for special permit applications for development projects and Committee members discussed how to be involved.

### *Information and discussion:*

- City staff and the Committee discussed how the Committee can provide input into 1) individual development projects—their impact and mitigation—and 2) general guidelines for developers in terms of transportation (and specifically transit) study requirements and mitigation (e.g., how to better assess the impact a development would have on the transit system, how to better match mitigation to impact). The City and Committee also discussed the need to consider development regionally, especially when considering Red Line capacity.
- Adam Shulman introduced a variety of resources for reviewing individual projects and developer requirements:
  - The [Special Permits](#) page of the Zoning and Development section of the website that contains, among other things, the [Active Special Permits Map](#)
  - Article 19 (“Project Review”) of the Zoning Ordinance, which can be found [here](#)
  - The [Development Log](#), listing larger-scale residential and commercial projects in progress
  - Traffic, Parking, and Transportation’s [Project Review](#) page, describing transportation impact study (TIS) guidelines and more
- Shulman described transportation mitigation proposed by MIT related to their special permit application, including contributions to EZRide, Hubway, a new MBTA headhouse at Kendall Square, etc.

## Discuss Recent News Items and Future Agenda Items

- The Transit Committee will meet in a new room for the February through May meetings. *Update since January Committee meeting:* the February meeting will take place in MIT Room 32-144. See map and directions [here](#).
- MBTA public meetings, *update since January Committee meeting:* the MBTA is hosting a series of meetings about [changes to late-night service](#) and [the fare proposal and commuter rail schedule changes](#). A late-night service meeting will take place on January 20 in Cambridge. See the [MBTA's Public Meetings webpage](#) for updates.
- Committee member Jeremy Mendelson’s organization [TransitMatters](#) is advocating for MBTA improvements alongside proposed fare increases. Please direct any feedback to Mr. Mendelson.

## Final Public Comment

Susan Ringler asked that the Committee be bold when advocating for transit improvements, as transit will play a large role in slowing climate change. Buildings must be built for the future, and plug-in cars, smart cars, bus rapid transit, as well as other tools must all be considered.

Adjourned at 7:30 pm